

Reno, "Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars," in Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), pp. 45–46, 56–57; Philippe LeBillon, "The Political Ecology of War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflicts," *Political Geography*, no. 20 (2001), pp. 561–84.

⁹ Ongoing fighting from Marc Lacey, "War Is Still a Way of Life for Congo Rebels," *New York Times*, 21 November 2002, and from Finbarr O'Reilly, "Rush for Natural Resources Still Fuels War in Congo," Reuters, 10 August 2004; illegal networks from United Nations Security Council, "Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (New York: 16 October 2002).

¹⁰ Renner, op. cit. note 1.

¹¹ Transparency codes and other efforts are discussed exhaustively in Ian Bannon and Paul Collier, eds., *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2003).

¹² Bannon and Collier, op. cit. note 11. Ian Smillie, *Conflict Diamonds: Unfinished Business* (Ottawa, ON, Canada: International Development Research Centre, 27 May 2002); U.S. Government Accounting Office, Critical Issues Remain in Deterring Conflict Diamond Trade (Washington, DC: June 2002), pp. 17–21. Robin Pomeroy, "E.U. Bids to Cut Down Worldwide Illegal Timber Trade," *Reuters*, 21 May 2003; Jeremy Smith, "E.U. Aims to Stem Illegal Rainforest Timber Trade," *Reuters*, 14 October 2003.

¹³ See, for example, the Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds in Washington, D.C., at www.phrusa.org/campaigns/sierra_leone/conflict_diamonds.html, Fatal Transactions Campaign in Amsterdam at www.niza.nl/fataltransactions/partner.html, Global Witness in London at www.globalwitness.org, Christian Aid in London at www.christian-aid.org.uk, and Project Underground in Berkeley, California at www.moles.org.

VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS: A SUMMARY

By Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts

Violent Environments both provides a critique of the standard narrative of relationships between violence, resources, and environment put forth by writers in the field of environmental security and suggests alternative ways of understanding these connections. In the introduction to the book, Nancy Peluso and Michael Watts define violence as a site-specific phenomenon rooted in local histories and social relations, yet connected to larger networks of power relations and processes of material transformation. The volume's contributors—an interdisciplinary collection of anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and historians—draw on rich bodies of literature not normally included in many policy, political science, or economics-driven debates over environment and security—namely, political ecology, agrarian studies, STS-studies, and the anthropology of violence. In contrast to more standard approaches, these contributions are not intended to merely identify the "environmental triggers" of violent conflicts; nor do the writers start from a presumed "resource scarcity." Rather, *Violent Environments* accounts for ways that specific resource environments (such as agricultural lands, tropical forests, or oil reserves), environmental processes (deforestation, conservation, or resource abundance), and cultural politics are constituted by, and in part constitute, the political economy of access to and control over resources.

We start with the entitlements by which different and differentiated individuals, households, and communities possess or gain access to resources within a given political economy. Our approach places great weight on how these entitlements are distributed, reproduced, and fought over in the course of shaping, and being shaped by, patterns of accumulation. We examine the changing contexts of nature transformation, who performs the labor, who bears the burdens, and how benefits are claimed, distributed, and contested. Transformations and instabilities in the conditions and characteristics of nature, environment, or natural resources produce concomitant “shiftings” of the positions of resource users, whether the poorest peasant or the most powerful transnational corporations. To begin to understand the complexities of violent environments, we argue, it is necessary to understand not only the actors—farmers, indigenous peoples, workers, the state, transnational capital—but also to locate them and their relations to each other in particular historical moments or conjunctures. Violence, as such, is thus best understood through examining the social relations within specific systems of accumulation and fields of power. The forms of violence, who engages them, and their dynamics are accordingly expanded, deepened, or contracted analytically.

We see the strength of this book as its contributors’ rejections of automatic, simplistic linkages between “increased environmental scarcity,” “decreased economic activity,” and “migration” which purportedly weaken states and cause conflicts and violence (Homer-Dixon 1994: 31). While these factors may certainly be present in situations where environmental

violence emerges, the authors in this book argue that they need to be both contextualized and theorized; in other words, they can not be viewed as unilateral causes of violence. Many times, such factors work in concert or are produced by violence.

We strongly disagree with the heavily Malthusian cast Homer-Dixon (1999) and others have given to what they call “environmental scarcity” and “violence.” In our view, and as other authors have argued (see, e.g., Ross, 1999, also Fairhead 2001), it is not simply *shortage* but also abundance that can be, and often is, associated with violence. Moreover, state or internationally sponsored processes of environmental rehabilitation or amelioration can have negative effects on competing users and produce violence as well—in conditions of both scarcity and abundance. Scarcity and abundance are historically (and environmentally) produced expressions of the kinds of social and political relations we mention above, and as such, should not be the starting point of an analysis. The case studies presented in the volume demonstrate time and again the great variation in forms of scarcity, abundance, and appropriation where violence occurs.

The authors in *Violent Environments* focus on the specific institutions and processes of production, accumulation, and resource access as well as the forms that nature and social relations take in aiming to understand the nature of resource conflict. This perspective ties all of our case studies together, although there is not a unity of vision imposed on the authors. Though most of our contributors, and we as editors, start from this approach, we all engage a variety of theoretical insights and grapple

with the strengths and weakness of a political ecology model. Political ecology represents a huge body of work, nearly 25 years in the making by geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists, working on resources, environment, culture and politics (see, for example Tim Forysth's review in *Critical Political Ecology*, 2003).

Violence as a set of social acts and relations ultimately stands awkwardly in respect to environmental concerns. The environment is increasingly present and yet frequently hidden by both the perpetrators and observers of violence alike. When *Violent Environments* came out (2001), very little work had explored explicitly the ways that environmental violence reflected or masked other forms of social struggle. In general, the ways different forms of violence systematically figured in environmental struggles was seriously under-theorized, despite the fact that global trends toward economic and political liberalization have brought an explosion of new property claims and protectionist strategies. Oftentimes, the resources and environments providing the fuel for capitalist expansion were kept out of view, as was the violence of their production. Some forms of resource development, including conservation, augment existing local tensions deriving from religion, ethnicity, gender, and class conflicts. Violent forms of surveillance and compliance are often used to enforce naturalized structures of resource control, but these are often obscured or hidden. As a result, the geographic and historical shifting of zones of peace and tension (Keane, 1996), and the manner and media of their representation, seem basic to an understanding of the changing contemporary landscapes of conservation and environmental management.

The papers in *VE* are organised in three sections, to suggest and illustrate three dynamic modalities of violent environments: (a) the forms, periodicities, and repertoires of environmental violence; (b) the intersection of violent extraction with resource and environmental characteristics; and (c) the normalization of environmental violence. The first set of papers examines *the patterns, tactics or rhythms of violence* and their associations with particular environmental relationships, particularly, but not limited to, those involving land. Authors in this section include Paul Richards, Nancy Peluso and Emily Harwell, James McCarthy, Iain Boal, and Aaron Bobrow-Strain. The second set examines *changing technologies of extraction and the changing loci of resource control in relation to the biophysical characteristics of resources or the environments* within which they are found. The authors in this section include Michael Watts, James Fairhead, Valerie Kuletz, Susan Stonich and Peter Vandergeest, and Paula Garb and Galina Komarova. The final set of papers examines *the coercive capacity of changing institutions of green governmentality and the normalization of violence*. In this section are papers by Roderick Neumann, Nandini Sundar, Amita Baviskar, and Ravi Rajan. Betsy Hartmann, in the introductory section, presents a systematic critique of the Project on Environment, Population, and Security.

Violent Environments has been deliberately constructed so that there are important continuities, overlaps, intersections and conversations amongst the authors. In particular, three themes cut across nearly all the papers: the direct and indirect roles of state agencies and actors in creating the conditions for and/or for mobilizing violence; the complex dialectics between resources

and identities (individual and collective) and the ways such identities are violently defended or contested; and the ways that community can be created from, maintained, and protected by violence. There are no automatic innocents in any of these relations and networks, nor is there necessarily a hope that some abstract state or force. We simply argue for better understandings of the specific ways in which history, memory, and the practices of people, states, and the forces of capitalism have come together violently.

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The book *Violent Environments* is available in paperback or hard cover from Cornell University Press. (ordering information on page 127)

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UNDERLYING CAUSES OF EXTREME CONFLICT AND TROPICAL FORESTS

By Wil de Jong, Deanna Donovan and Ken Ichi Abe

A close examination of many of the extreme conflicts in the 20th century shows an important link with tropical forests. Three-quarters of Asian forests, two thirds of African forests and one-third of Latin American forests have been affected by violent conflict. The last remaining tropical forests are located in areas that over the past two decades have been subjected to violent conflict.

Direct causal links between extreme conflicts and tropical forests seem obvious. Historically we have seen that forests provide refuge for warring factions of all sides. The American War in Vietnam was largely fought in forested areas. Nicaragua's Contras launched their attacks from the country's forests, and many settled there once the conflict ended. Drug lords favour forests because they not only provide land for illicit crop production and processing, but also shelter from state law enforcement agents. The drug lords and their armies who control cocaine production in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia operate in remote forest regions. Refugees from wars flee to forest areas because not only can they hide there, they can also find basic resources for survival. The refugees from Rwanda fled to the border region with Congo, and camped near or inside that country's rich forest. Forests also provide valuable commercial resources with which one or more of the parties can finance militia operations.